

# **MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 6, 2003**

Chair Darrel Fournier called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:02pm at the Maine Emergency Medical Services conference room, 156 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Representative Thomas Bull, Chief Jeffrey Cammack, John Cannon, John Dean, Representative Robert Duplessie, Chief Darrel Fournier, Albert Godfrey, Sr., Edward Johnston, Geoffrey Maker, Harty Norris, Chief Jethro Pease, David Wacker, Leslie Wiles, Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (staff). Members absent were Jay Bradshaw, Randy Keep and Senator Christine Savage.

***A motion by Ted Johnston, seconded by Steve Willis, to accept the minutes of December 2, 2002.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Staff distributed the draft of the final report on Penflex's study on the length-of-service award programs (LOSAPs) and members were asked to review the draft for discussion at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Training Facilities:** The committee continues to work with Vicki Schmidt of the Hebron Fire Department and the Bureau of Land and Water Quality (GIS department) on the survey data. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 3, 2003 at 10:00am.

**Mapping/Surveying Committee:** The committee has been working to present the survey data in a geographical format. With the assistance of Vicki Schmidt, the committee plans to develop a visual presentation of the survey data and to use the enhanced information at the Maine Fire Service Day at the State House and in future Fire Commission reports and presentations. Initial maps will include fire department personnel distribution (career, volunteer, call), reporting departments and existing training facilities.

The Fire Commission discussed the Maine Fire Service Day at the State House scheduled for Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Members agreed to host a breakfast and lunch in the Hall of Flags and instructed staff to contact local catering businesses. Discussion also included sample menus, the numbers of people to be served and which groups would contribute to the costs. Fire Commission members were updated on final plans for the Fire Service Day

including the attendance of local Fire Chaplains and color guard, the groups represented in the Hall of Flags and distribution of available space and tables and the possible presentation of the first “Best Practice Award” by Governor Baldacci. Members also discussed the need to design and distribute a flyer to the members of the Legislature prior to Thursday’s event.

Fire Commission members discussed hosting an evening Legislative reception similar to last year’s event at the Ground Round in Augusta. Members suggested groups not represented at the Maine Fire Service Day could be included and agreed to spread the word and discuss specifics at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Members are looking at holding the legislative reception on Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>.

Fire Commission members next discussed the proposed idea of hosting a one-day spring conference at the Augusta Civic Center. Suggestions included a morning program discussing fire service issues, highlighted by a keynote speaker with national prominence. The afternoon sessions would feature target groups and workshops on topics such as training. The purpose would be to exchange and share information with fire service personnel and although the focus of the convention would be for the fire service, legislators and others would be welcome. Members discussed financing and one suggestion was that each organization would sponsor an afternoon session. However, the Fire Commission would need to generate revenues to pay for the keynote speaker, morning sessions, meals and materials for participants, mailings, rental of the Augusta Civic Center, and additional expenses associated with such an event. One suggestion was to consider an evening session so volunteer firefighters could attend.

Fire Commission members agreed the idea of a fire service conference was beneficial for Maine’s fire service, but expressed concern that a Spring 2003 event would be unrealistic considering the necessary planning and organizing involved. Members agreed to coordinate with the Maine Fire Chiefs and Maine Fire Training and Education to propose a plan to host a convention in spring/early summer of 2004.

***A motion by Ted Johnston, seconded by Al Godfrey, that the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission sponsor a conference in Spring 2004 and look for a national speaker and additional funding sources for the convention.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Staff distributed a draft of the Fire Commission’s annual report. Members took ten minutes to review the draft and discussion followed. Members expressed concerns on information that was not included in the draft, specifically on the issue of health care, the health care study and the loss of funds for the study. Members wanted to include language regarding the health and aging of Maine’s fire service, underscore the work of the recruitment and retention committee and send a strong message on healthcare. Members wanted the annual report to reflect their strong commitment to provide health care to all firefighters and will ask the Legislature to restore funds to complete the study. Ted Johnston agreed to forward draft language to staff on the health care issue.

Fire Commission members discussed adding language to the annual report regarding a permanent funding solution for the State Fire Marshal's Office and Maine Fire Training and Education. Members spoke of the funding uncertainty faced each year by SFMO and MFT&E and about submitting a bill to study ways to secure permanent funding. Members discussed that their charge is to find a solution to the funding problem and to make a recommendation to the Legislature and the Governor. Discussions continued about the need to document the critical services provided by SFMO and MFT&E and that they serve a broad public interest and should be funded by the General Fund. John Dean and Steve Willis agreed to forward draft language to staff to incorporate into the report. Additional changes were noted and the report will be redrafted for members to review.

Fire Commission members discussed the State Fire Marshal's Office fee schedule and the plan to submit legislation to the 121<sup>st</sup> Legislature regarding the restructuring of its plans review fees. The SFMO will ask to adjust the fees through rulemaking. Members of the Fire Commission expressed concern that the change in administration may delay this important funding source and wanted to provide a means to present the legislation this session. Members discussed their support of legislation that will address funding for the SFMO and MFT&E and to continue to seek ongoing funding sources, to use existing funding mechanisms to make up for the shortfall, and make long-term funding a priority.

***A motion by Ted Johnston, seconded by Al Godfrey, that the Fire Commission initiates and supports legislation to the 121<sup>st</sup> Legislature that will address funding for the State Fire Marshal's Office and Maine Fire Training and Education.*** The motion passed unanimously.

***A motion by John Cannon, seconded by Jethro Pease, that the Fire Commission submit legislation regarding the State Fire Marshal's Office and its plans review fees and the SFMO's ability to set their fee structure through rulemaking.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Members discussed the legislative vacancies on the Fire Commission and potential candidates. The Fire Commission's bylaws allow for the Vice Chair "to serve in the absence, inability, or resignation of the Chair". Elections "shall be held at the regularly scheduled meeting in April" according to the bylaws, so members agreed Chief Darrel Fournier would continue to serve as Chair of the Fire Commission. Fire Commission members, citing areas where the bylaws are silent, agreed to review the bylaws and make suggestions when necessary. Fire Commission members learned that Tim Verdon would replace Randy Keep at the Legislature this session although it is uncertain whether he will serve on the Fire Commission.

Fire Commission members discussed meeting with the Criminal Justice committee in February. Staff distributed a packet of information on the members

of the Criminal Justice committee. Members discussed the importance of educating the new members, presenting the annual report and securing their support on potential legislation. Members were urged to recognize financial realities this session. One suggestion was to approach the Criminal Justice committee and ask them to include the Fire Commission as part of their budget presentation to the Appropriations committee: to discuss the length-of-service award program (LOSAPs) and health care, to begin the discussion on the numbers and to start serious discussion to meet these needs.

Fire Commission members have asked staff to look into scheduling the next few meetings at the State House to accommodate the schedules of the Legislative members and to allow members to attend legislative meetings.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Fournier adjourned the meeting at 3:19pm.

The Maine Fire Protection Services Commission has scheduled the following dates:

	Monday, February 3, 2003	10:00am	Training Facilities Committee
	Monday, February 3, 2003	1:00pm	Fire Commission meeting
	Monday, March 3, 2003	1:00pm	Fire Commission meeting
(tentative)	Tuesday, March 11, 2003	4-8:00pm	Legislative reception

Still to be scheduled:

Meeting with the Criminal Justice committee

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette

